

We have to apologise to your Excellency for the infliction of the above tedious narrative, but it appeared to us necessary to enable your Excellency to understand our position, with a view to such steps being taken as your Excellency may seem fit.

We also feel called upon to notice remarks made by the Hon. the Native Minister, Mr. Bryce, in his place in the House of Representatives, on the 2nd July, ultimo, reported in *Hansard*, page 687. Mr. Bryce states that he had on many occasions applied to the Commissioners, desiring to receive information as to when they were likely to make a report, but could never get any reply. We are not aware of any application or question put to us, either in writing or verbally, to which a reply was not given at once.

The correspondence, copies of which accompany this letter, shows that replies were given to the only letters received by us on the subject. Mr. Bryce further states that he expressed to one of the Commissioners his surprise that no interim report had been received from them. On the 30th June the Commissioners referred to had an interview with Mr. Bryce on further imprest supplies for the Commission. Mr. Bryce expressed his opinion that it was not likely the House would vote a further supply, and, further, that the Government did not intend to ask for such a vote. Mr. Bryce then inquired why an interim report had not been sent in, and was answered that such a report could only be made at the expense of the final report, and that a final report would be sent in when the Commissioners had finished taking the necessary evidence, which might probably be done in about three months; and, in reply to a question from Mr. Bryce as to when the Commission were likely to send in their report, he was answered thus: "In about three months. I will go to Auckland and consult my colleague on the question of an interim report, but I have objections to any such report, as it could only be made at the expense of the final report."

With reference to presenting an *ad interim* report, we are at a loss to understand the object or advantage of doing so. The inquiry we have been directed to make relates to the past. We have to ascertain facts connected with transactions long since passed and concluded, and we have not, as in the case of the Native Commission on the West Coast, recommendations to make, the carrying out of which might affect a final report.

With respect to the expenditure incurred, we feel that to be a question with which we are not called upon to deal. We accepted our Commission without reference to any question of the cost of carrying it out. That our expenditure has not been wasteful or extravagant, the accounts will, we doubt not, sufficiently show. The amount expended may appear large, but it should be borne in mind that the work necessarily involved considerable outlay or expense. The Commissioners had to pay their secretary and shorthand reporter, also travelling expenses for the whole party, passages by steamer, fares by railway, &c., expenses of witnesses to a partial extent, hire of rooms, and numberless other expenses inseparable from such a work as devolved upon them, as it did, to hold sittings in Auckland, Wellington, Otaki, Christchurch, Kaiapoi, Dunedin, Port Chalmers, Waikouaiti, Akaroa, and Riverton.

The question of providing the necessary funds is, we presume, one for Parliament to deal with, and we will not remark further upon it.

As regards Mr. Bryce's reference to what he terms a barren result, we have only to say that the result, so far as it is yet developed, has cost labour and care, as well as money, and we may, we think, be pardoned should we ask if it is not premature to stigmatize it as a barren one.

We have, &c.,

THOS. H. SMITH,

FRANCIS E. NAIRN,

Commissioners.

His Excellency Sir Hercules George Robert Robinson, G.C.M.G.,
Governor of New Zealand.

Enclosure 1 in No. 1.

Mr. T. W. LEWIS to the COMMISSIONERS.

GENTLEMEN,—

Native Office, Wellington, 19th January, 1880.

I have the honor, by direction of the Hon. the Native Minister, to request you will be good enough to report what progress you have made in connection with the Middle Island Commission since your last interview with him on the subject several weeks ago.

Mr. Bryce desires me to state that, if such satisfactory progress has not been made as will indicate an early conclusion of the inquiry, the Government will seriously consider whether the Commission should not at once terminate.

I have, &c.,

T. H. Smith, Esq., and F. E. Nairn, Esq.,

T. W. LEWIS,

Middle Island Commission, Wellington.

Under-Secretary.

Enclosure 2 in No. 1.

The Middle Island Native Land Purchase Commission,

Provincial Buildings, Wellington, 20th January, 1880.

SIR,—

We have the honor to acknowledge receipt of Mr. Under-Secretary Lewis's letter, No. 1332, requesting us to report what progress we have made in connection with the Middle Island Commission since our last interview with you on the subject several weeks ago.

In reply we have the honor to state that, since the date of the interview referred to, much important evidence has been taken by us, given by the gentlemen named in the margin.* We have further to state, for your information, that the prosecution of the inquiry we are charged with by our Commission, and which makes it necessary that we should sit at Akaroa and at Dunedin, has been

* A. Mackay, Esq., Sir George Grey, Hon. Mr. Mantell,